A FEW WORDS

To

Mr. M. K. Gandhi,

By

Sri Ramananda Sarasvati Swami

at **MAHADANAPURAM,**

(Trichy. Dt.)

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FOR CALM PERUSAL, DELIBERATION AND ACTION—NOT FOR HURRIED REPLY.

A FEW WORDS

To,

Mr. M. K. Gandhi,

By Sri Ramananda Sarasvati Swami
at MAHADANAPURAM.
(Trichy. Dt.)

SIR,

You are a great man in some respects. You deservedly became a political leader of this country, and you would have largely succeeded in your political aims had you only confined your efforts to politics alone. But, unfortunately for the land and the great Hindu Nation in particular, you imprudently allowed the purely socio-religious question of "Untouchability" to stealthily creep into the political

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camps and interfere with your legitimate work. Now that your work in the political field has for more reasons than one become considerably curtailed, you have whole-heartedly begun to carry on your campaign against "Untouchability" on a mistaken notion of its alliance with politics, as will be pointed out later on, and because of the absence of the right knowledge in you of the provisions of the all-elevating Hindu Sastraic literature on the subject. Great as you are, your utterances cannot but have a telling effect on the Mass of the people of the country. If without adequate study or proper information you happen to give out any opinion of yours which may *in fact* be wrong, especially when it affects the social and religious well-being of the vast Hindu community, the result must inevitably be wholesale calamity and ruin. Your responsibility is indeed immense.

2. You should remember that there is not a country or nation in the world in which the rules of "Untouchability" and "Unapproachability" do not obtain in some measure or other. Such rules as are laid down in the Hindu Sastras are only more scientific and more in conformity with the facts of nature, many of which facts still remain unknown to the

Non-Hindus, a circumstance which accounts for the rules among them being but vague, narrow and unscientific. Certainly, you will not allow a scavenger to approach very near you, much less to touch you or sit with you for dinner on the same table however much he may have cleaned his body with soap and washing and dressed it in the best style. Why? Supposing for argument's sake you say you have no objection to allow all that, then I ask you when the scavenger is unwashed why should he not be allowed to move with you similarly. Your answer will, of course, be that he is unclean. You grant then that "*Uncleanliness or Impurity*" is a ground for considering a man untouchable and unapproachable. This is a ground common to all, whether Hindus or Non-Hindus.

3. The Non-Hindu has no belief that man, before his birth in this life, had any existence at all. So, in his view, all the humanity having come into existence for the first and last time here, by the will of God or otherwise as he may think, possess bodies of equal worth and purity, and any rule of distinction therefore between man and man on the mere ground of birth must be indeed unjust. The Non-

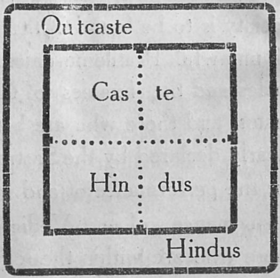
Hindu admits however that the bodies of men may become purer or more impure by reason of their several deeds and professions; and the ordinary rules of untouchability and unapproachability in a way observed among the Non-Hindu communities of the world are considered by him as perfectly justifiable. The true Hindu, it must be borne in mind, is a believer in Karma and Re-incarnation. In his view, which is based on Sastraic declarations, the Panchama is one who is born as such for gross wilful violation of some important provisions of the Varnasrama Dharma, of which he was guilty in a previous life of his as a caste-Hindu, and who in the present life as a Panchama has to work out that particular bad Karma by obeying the Dharmic rules of his class and also to seek the redemption of his Soul by the means specifically allotted to him by the Sastras in reference to devotion to God and service to humanity. The re-incarnating Jeeva, in the case under consideration, is by Eswara directed to the particular father's body which alone can supply the necessary primal elements of the germ of the would-be material body of the Jeeva possessing in themselves all such potentialities, proclivities and contortions in an invisible state as may be suitable to and

compatible with the Jeeva's intended life that is to begin. Even the sperm-body of the Panchama therefore, during his sojourn in his father's physical frame, has been impure. This initial impurity of the Panchama's body can never be eradicated in this life. This impurity which is born with the body can vanish only with it. It is too much ingrained in it to be washed away by the best soap. It is in the very marrow of his physical being. He cannot hope to remove it by any change in appearance or in habits of life or by even conversion to another religion altogether. The view that is held by some people that a Panchama, if converted to another religion, may be freely moved with by the caste-Hindus is absolutely wrong.

4. The genesis of the Panchama communities (of the fifth class as it were) of the present-day Hindu society is to be found in the original heinous kinds of unlawful Pratiloma-unions between the Sudra-males and the females of the Dwija or twice-born castes, and those who are born of such unions are clearly declared by the Sastras to be altogether unfit for the performance of and for even partaking in the performance of the Vedic Karmas prescribed for those who are within the four main castes (Chatur-

varnyam). The present-day Panchamas are all direct lineal descendants of persons so born. It must be remembered however that, though the Panchamas are outside the fold of castes (hence outcastes), their communities, having originally directly arisen out of those who were within the fold of Chaturvarnyam, are fully guided by the Sastraic rules of conduct, devotional and spiritual and of untouchability and unapproachability in their relations with the caste-Hindus. However they are none the less Hindus. The Varnasrama Dharma system, standing as it does for Saddharma, can only and does give them an honourable place on the outskirts of the Hindu nation. Every place is equally, honourable whether on the outskirts or in the interior, and honourableness is in truth more in the individual than in the place.

The Hindu Nation:—



5. To speak out the plain truth, you, having spent most of your impressionable years of life in England and Africa, have largely imbibed the spirit of thinking on foreign or un-Hindu lines, and you in your present endeavours are unconsciously carrying on the work of the Christian Missionaries to the direct prejudice of the true Hindu socio-religious life and aspirations. The Panchamas have been all along a contented happy lot of the Hindu community, enjoying life with a freedom not allowed to others, having monopoly almost of the work of cultivation in this great land of agriculture, possessing rights over property not a whit less than those of others, and ever enjoying equal rights with others to state-protection in every respect. Until the Christian Missionaries, with known objects of their own, began to sow the seeds of discontent and dislike in the Panchama quarters a few decades ago, the idea of 'depression or oppression was nowhere in this country. When the European missionaries saw that the Panchamas were living in far-off quarters, with wells and other conveniences of their own separately, away from the habitations of the rest of the Hindus and behaving themselves in a way, by keeping distance and so on, which showed that there was, as applicable to them,

some rule of a kind of social exclusion, they at once jumped to the conclusion that the Panchamas were actually ill-treated by the Caste-Hindus, such a conclusion having been only a natural one with the Europeans whose consciousness of their own inhuman behaviour, under the Lynch-Law and such like barbarous provisions towards the Blacks and Browns of America and Africa must have evidently made them suspect a similar offence on the part of the caste-Hindus also. Having rushed to such a conclusion, the European propagandists readily used the presumed position of the Panchamas as a handy circumstance that could very well help their own Christian cause, and their Indian satellites were, of course, ready tools in their hands to fully work the mischief by freely mixing with the Panchamas and slowly poisoning their open, unlettered minds against their Hindu brethren. Thus, the innocent, peaceful, contented life of the Panchamas was by degrees ruffled into one of suspicion, discontent, dislike and even hatred in some cases in the end. Christian work however did not stop with this.

6. The foreign missionary, with the aid of facilities which were overflowingly available to him

under the modern-day State-government, took a leading part in the so-called education of the country, founded schools and colleges, and offered inducements to students to join their institutions; and our simple-minded Hindu parents and guardians most readily and even thankfully sent their boys, even girls sometimes, to such institutions and felt gratified at the saving of a few rupees which would have been lost to them had they sent their wards to non-Missionary institutions. Coming from a commercial race, the missionary knew quite well that by accepting smaller fees and by offering numerous scholarships he would not be a loser in the end. We all know *now* he was perfectly right in his calculation. The idea of "depression" and other such pet-ideas of the Indian Social Reform movement, now so very familiar to us, which are calculated to do away with the special characteristics of the Hindu society and its Dharmic culture, were originally instilled into the receptive minds of the Hindu students studying in such missionary institutions, and by the time those students came out of them they were many of them, but not all, thanks to God, staunch supporters of the view, among other mistaken views of the kind, that our Panchama brethren were being most

ruthlessly downtrodden by the caste-Hindus under the pretence of religion and Dharma. Such ideas they carried abroad and preached in season and out of season till even other students, students studying in other institutions, imbibed such ruinous ideas by contagious association, till in fact the whole atmosphere in towns and villages was surcharged with them, till the mischief worked by them became ripe for yielding hate and harm as is clearly evident now. It needs no mention that when such young men become in course of time the elders of the community, of leading influence too, the country must largely present the phenomenon of the blind led by the blind, leading to and ending in utter social confusion and Dharmic disgrace. The Hindu Society now is in a fair way of reaching such a consummation in evil. It is no wonder therefore that you are now able to command crowded audiences and large following wherever you go and preach against untouchability and unapproachability.

7. The pioneers of "the elevation of the depressed classes movement," in imitation of the aforesaid missionaries, have invented "depressing" where there has been none. No caste-Hindu, Brahmana

or non-Brahmana, ever as such, countenanced or has been in any manner justified in countenancing discomfort or misery in the Panchama quarters. The Hindu Panchama has always been, as indicated above, as much a citizen of the country and follower of the Hindu religion as any other Hindu; and what is the depth of degradation into which he has been unjustly thrown, from which his tearful saviour of the modern light is attempting or going to raise him? Citizenship, if analysed, implies restriction; so also does religiousness. Whatever restrictions are wholesome and necessary to avoid any spread of contamination, to preserve the types of purity and to keep unconfused, one from another, the distinct results following on distinct modes of activity which are mutually exclusive in character because of their varying aims and objects, and whatever means and directions are conducive to the unimpeded growth of all that is good and pure, and noble and lofty, away from any unfavourable influence and untouched by any destructive or hampering element, should all be made, provided for and even enforced in the general interests of the community and in view of the safety and progress of its individuals; and such prohibitive directions and provisions can imply nothing of de-

pression or oppression at all. Certainly the caste-Hindu does not *depress* his wife when he keeps her out of doors for three days in the month, nor does he *oppress* his elders when he refuses to touch them when they are under pollution. Nor can you accuse the Government of a similar offence when the authorities compel residence in segregation camps for plague-infected people. As remarked already, in the case of the Panchamas, hereditary pollution is so very deep-rooted and persistent that it continues throughout the whole life time. For us Hindus, who beleive in the truths of Karma and Re-incarnation, a life-time is but a fleeting moment and an incarnation is but a small passing event, in the infinitude of time and existence. Hue and cry would no doubt be raised by the little froglings that can know nothing beyond their present narrow-walled existence and whose accidentally got life of today (God-given or chance-given as they imagine) they feel bound to keep cheery at any cost. But, none who is a true Hindu and who is expected to know better would join in the cry.

8. Of course, the caste-Hindus ought not to ignore the interests of their Panchama brethren, nor

fail to discharge their wonted duty to them, namely the duty to see to their conveniences and welfare in all respects and also to treat them respectfully. The foolish and improper behaviour on the part of some caste-Hindus treating the Panchamas (especially the workmen) with disrespect and even contempt is highly condemnable indeed. But, this misbehaviour, which is itself a grave sin, cannot be a ground for attempting to relieve the Panchama of the natural and Sastraic disabilities of his class. It is true that for some past bad Karmas the Panchamas are already made subject to such disabilities. To such disabilities the caste-Hindus ought not to add insult also. If they do, they deserve severe punishment themselves. If, in addition to the already existing disabilities of the prisoners in the Jail, the jail authorities or other visitors should, without justification, behave insultingly towards the prisoners, such insulters would be punished in due course for their misbehaviour. Such misbehaviour however can be no excuse at all for anybody to attempt to rescue the prisoners from the jail itself. Any such attempt at rescuing or releiving is itself a gross offence for which the sympathetic attempter would be severely punished. You may now see in what unenviable

position you are now. Again, that we should show due respect and sympathy to the Panchamas does not mean at all that we must neglect our own spiritual interests or give up our allotted specific Dharmas and mix up with the Panchamas indiscriminately. It is clearly your Dharma to work for and elevate other people who may be found in a comparatively low level of knowledge and life, without slipping down or descending to that low level *yourself*. Keeping yourself firm at your own height of advancement, you must, from where you are, try your utmost to lift up others from their respectve conditions of life and knowledge. Your present movement does not impose on the caste-Hindu any new duty, but it only ignorantly wants him to give up his Sastraic Dharma and to make or compel the Panchama also to give up his, so that both of them may fall into the depths of degradation and ruin. So, your movement is not one of elevation of the depressed, but only one of depression of the elevated and of degradation of the Panchamas also. The great Nanda can surely be no object of admiration today had he not scrupulously stuck up to his strict Panchama-life and duty. I wish you carefully study the life-history of that great Panchama-bhakta before you talk more on the

elevation of the Panchamas and on the question of their Temple-entry.

9. You want to allow access into all the Hindu temples for the Panchamas. Of course, you say there can be no real distinction between man and man, and that in the presence of God. But, how do you know that really there is God in the temples? All that we see in them are only stone and metal images. Inquiry however enables you to know that in every Hindu temple proper, whoever may have been its founder, it has been the Brahmana that has made a God of a mere mason-worked stone or smith-worked metal. You cannot beleive at all that there is God in any such temple unless you believe also that the Brahmana has the Mantric capacity to create a deity out of a stone or metal *by following the Sastraic provisions.* If you have neither kind of belief, you will certainly not bother yourself and others about such temples and entries into them. Your efforts show that you *do* beleive that our temples are real houses of the Almighty One in whatever form may He be worshipped in them. Your authority for such belief is and can be only the Sastra which has made such provisions. Then, you should try

also to know all about the temples through the knowers of the Sastra and obey the rules laid down by it for worship in the temples. Such rules definitely say that the Panchamas ought not to enter within the premises of the temples at all and that they could make Darsanam only from outside. No doubt, God is common to all, but "common" in what sense? Even supposing it is only in the ordinary sense of the term, what of that ? Is not the sensible head of each family commonly interested in all its members, and do not all the members consider him their common protector ? But, can this be a ground for all the members to behave in exactly the same way towards him ? If however you know the higher, truer sense of the term "common," you cannot consistently stick to your mission in respect of the temples intended chiefly for those who cannot grasp that truer meaning. Again, can the reason, that God is common to all give a right to all to enter into the Hindu temples ? That God is common cannot show that His manifestation through the temple image can be availed of by all without restraint. It is by means of considerable Mantric and Tantric ceremonials (prescribed in the Sastra) at great cost and after much worry and trouble

such manifestation (Sannidhyam) is brought about by competent people with the specific object that it should be availed of in strict accordance with the rules laid down by the Sastra, rules which have in view, not the exclusion of anybody, but only the preservation of such Sannidhyam intact without abatement. It is undeniable that electricity pervades everywhere and is common to all. Can the fact that it is so common be a ground for saying that, if an electric engineer, after much trouble, brings about a new electrive machine, every one who goes by the street can approach that machine and spoil it ? The new-comer will, of course, be allowed to stand at the prescribed distance, to admire it and even to substantially profit by it. The great Panchama Bhakta Nanda had the full benefit of Eswara-Darsanam though he made that Darsanam by standing outside the temple-premises. Such a full benefit even the Brahmans, who could go in right up to the very sanctum sanctorum within the temple could not have.

10. If you claim to be a true Hindu, you cannot afford to ignore the Sastraic literature of the Hindu religion. You say you have studied the Bhagavad

Gita. Has not the Lord told you in clear terms that for the determination of all right actions and omissions it is the Sastra that is to be your guide? Eswara has declared elsewhere that by "Sastra" is meant the Sruti and the Smriti, that these are his immutable commandments, and that those who violate them become his faithless Drohis. So, consistently with your position as a true Hindu, you cannot cast to the winds the Sastraic provisions binding upon you and speak and act according to your mere *personal inclinations*. It is a plain fact that in your present campaign against untouchability and in favour of temple-entry for Panchamas you are mainly guided by your *personal inclinations* which are, of course, coloured and shaped largely by your foreign culture. But, knowing as you do that the Hindus generally may not be willing to be solely guided by your personal inclinations alone, as alienated from the Sastraic Dharma, you are now and then obliged to announce to your ignorant mass-audience that your campaign is in perfect agreement with the Sastras and that there is nothing in the Sastras at all justifying the immemorial customary conditions and disabilities of the Panchamas. If after reading the newspaper report of your astounding announcement, any knower

of the Sastras contradicted your statement by quoting innumerable passages from the Sastras themselves, as was done by Brahmasri R. Krishnaswami Aiyar M. A., B. L. of Tinnevely in 1922 through the columns of the "Hindu", referring to such conditions and disabilities, you immediately turn round and say that you have no knowledge of the Sastras at all and that what you deemed best in the interest of the public you gave expression to. If on any occasion any Hindu Sastragna, like Brahmasri Thethiyur Subrahmania Sastrtigal of Madura, takes the trouble of going to you, by making a long Journey, with a view to discuss with you and to convince you, you feel unable to discuss and you are constrained to give diplomatic and evasive replies and to send away the visitor quite disappointed. Now again that His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya Swami of the Jagannath (Poori) Mutt has thrown a challenge to you and desires to have a proper debate with you on the subjects of untouchability and temple-entry, you seem not inclined or prepared to meet him at all and you are evading him. Notwithstanding all this, you do not hesitate, in your speeches even now before ignorant masses, to continue to make your usual daring announcements and assertions as if based on the Sastras,

and you are sometimes reported to have vainly said also that you are prepared to give up your campaign altogether if anybody would satisfy you that it is against the Sastras. All this objectionable conduct of yours does no credit to your innate goodness and honesty at all. You have evidently no proper knowledge of the Hindu Dharmic religion, and you have yourself admitted that all your knowledge of the religion is derived only through your study of Tulasi Das's Ramayanam and a translation of the Gita and nothing else. It is an undoubted fact that in neither of these two works details of the Hindu-Dharmas are given. How can you dare to claim any knowledge of those Dharmas at all ? If then your position is such that you have not yet learnt the A. B. C. of the Dharma-Sastraic provisions, and if, as mentioned above, you yourself avoid all opportunities of getting enlightened through competent knowers, how can it be possible for anybody to satisfy you at all that your campaign is in truth anti-Sastraic ? If however you *now* sincerely desire to know whether or not your campaign has the sanction of the Sastras, you should be prepared to arrange for or at least to allow the convening of a proper Parishat of Pandits from all parts of India, Pandits who are well aware

of the Dharmasastras which deal with the points in question, and to abide by the verdict of the Parishat. Such a Parishat may be arranged to be held in this very place (Mahadanapuram) or any other place which may be more suitable to your convenience. Of course, the Pandits, if any, who may be your supporters will certainly be allowed to take a prominent part by leading the opposition in the Parishat-discussions. Further, you must suspend your campaign-work till after the aforesaid verdict is secured. If however you do not agree to this proposal and if in your heart of hearts you feel that the Sastras are really against you and also if in fact you do not care for the Sastras at all, honestly proclaim to the world your real position and carry on your work, philanthropic as it may seem to you, in the way which may appear best to you *in such position.* No Hindu will quarrel with you then. Troubles all arise when you want to pass for a Sastraic Hindu preacher while in fact preaching anti-Hindu views and methods of procedure.

11. If on the other hand you are unwilling to give up your status as a Hindu proper, take then your firm stand as such Hindu and think out the best

and safest way of helping the true interests of the Hindu Nation under the modern-day conditions. If you feel that your extreme views regarding the political emancipation of the country are unworkable under the present circumstances, try to make the best of the facilities that are now made available to you under the present-day Government for serving your national interests. In any event, you must once for all give up your present mistaken campaign altogether. Instead of unconsciously creating and widening a cleavage between the caste-Hindus and the outcaste-Hindus, which is the direct immediate result of your ill-thought campaign, try to enable the government to see that, notwithstanding innumerable, necessary inner differentiations and divisions in the world-old Hindu nation, the nation is a single composite whole and that the attempt of the government to separate the interests of the outcaste-Hindus or Panchamas from those of the rest for purposes of representation and voting in Councils and Assemblies is quite improper. If the existence of the purely social rules of exclusion in the mutual relationship of the people of the nation is made a ground for separating their political interests one from another, there will be no end for such separation at all. Among the Panchamas themselves there

are many inner divisions characterised by mutual social exclusiveness. Among the caste-Hindus themselves, as you know very well, the rules of mutual exclusion ·e innumerable indeed, and untouchability and un- pproachability do obtain among them inter se in a ay. Do you consider the existence of all such social les as any hindrance to your national political work all ? Why trouble your mind about the internal cial differences between caste-Hindus and out- ste-Hindus, when you do not mind similar differe- es, though perhaps in lesser degrees, in the mu- al relationship of the out-caste-Hindus among emselves and the caste-Hindus among themselves parately ? Whether caste-Hindus or outcaste Hin- is all are Hindus and should be one in the eye of e government. You must educate the government cultivate such unifying sight. Again, what have e Hindu social rules, which are based on natural iths revealed only by the Veda-Sastraic lite- ure, to do with the system of government esta- shed by the Christian Rulers or with the political itations which have in view the bettering of such system ? That is to say, under the present govern- ment, *politics have nothing to do with the Hindu social and religious rules of conduct.* So, such rules

should not by mistake be availed of by the government for 'separating' the political interests of the Hindus inter se on any account. Because of a grave mistake likely to be committed by the government you are actually committing the graver mistake of attempting to do away with the Hindu Sastraic social restrictions based on eternal, natural truths. Foreign governments may come and go, but the Sastraic Dharmas which necessitate such restrictions are eternal and unchangeable. Your legitimate work therefore is in the direction of educating the government to cultivate the sight of unity referred to above and of making the government more and more agreeable to the Hindu Dharma, not of twisting and spoiling the Hindu Dharma itself. The shoe must be made suitable to the foot; the foot should not be chopped off to suit the new shoe which may be replaced by another. You have therefore to be closely watching and bettering the vision of the government then and there. Your real national work is at present only *there*, not in temples, nor before the masses.

12. If however your present temperament cannot allow you to co-operate with the government in

any manner whatsoever, the only other legitimate course left to you is absolute retirement from public life with a view to secure Atma-Jnanam or Self-realisation in the end through the necessary preliminary training in calm devotional activities and through proper Vichara or studies under a duly qualified Spiritual Guru, far away from the bustle of the ever-warring world. You are already much over 60 years of age, and it is high time for you to think of your truer Self and to kick up all concerns with the low mundane sphere as but trash worthy only of the brute in man, not of the Self in him. You seem to be under a huge delusion that your present campaign is itself a great and noble service to God. But, the truth is your campaign is one of faithlessness or Droham to God and disservice to man. It is backed up and invigourated by the formidable Master of the Age, namely Kalipurusha who seems to have chosen you as his fit medium. You are reported to have sometimes said that you have directly felt the influence of the Almighty Being Eswara Himself in your own personality. That there is Eswara is made known to us all only through the Sastraic literature. In the same literature, as once before mentioned, Eswara has definitely stated that the one who vio-

lates the provisions of the Srutis and the Smritis is His faithless Drohi. The Srutis make specific reference to Panchamas like Chandalas and to their positions, and the Smritis give detailed descriptions of the several classes of Panchamas and of the conditions and disabilities of their life. As your campaign directly violates the provisions found in the Srutis and the Smritis, the true Hindu cannot but believe that the invigourating influence which you have felt in your personality is one prompted by Kalipurusha who alone is interested in the successful carrying on of your campaign. Do not be duped by a false faith that Eswara is on your side, backing up your anti-Dharmic mission, which He would never do. The true Hindu cannot but pity you and shed tears for you as you are at present situated. Your admiring mob-audiences of the present day cannot help you when you find yourself in unbearable troubles in future beyond, Karmic troubles which have in justice to be proportionate to your huge and extensive responsibility now. Shake off your Mohum or delusion. Wake up at once and save yourself in time before it is too late. The past you cannot recall and mend. Let it go. Make the best of your present and try to better your future

by acting from now as a genuine Hindu. I shall not say more.

Mahadanapuram.
Srimukha,
Makaram. 10.
23-1-1934.

Ramananda Sarasvati.